

Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc.

[www.ccccnh.org](http://www.ccccnh.org)

February 17, 2012

Testimony In Support of H.B. 5014,  
An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues  
for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Cheryl Burack and I'm representing Coordinating Council For Children In Crisis, Inc. and the Coalition for Nurturing Families Network. I would like to express my appreciation to Governor Malloy for funding early care and education programs including early home visitation through the DSS Children's Trust Fund Nurturing Families Network.

We know that the child's interaction with his or her environment – including the caretaking, nurturing and love that the child receives - has a material impact on the way the brain develops. Early home visitation services to vulnerable families positively impact children's health, social, emotional and cognitive development beginning at birth. By age three, 80% of brain development is complete. Before age three, a Home Visitor may be the only outsider who sees the family on a regular basis, putting him or her in a unique position to identify and address

problems early and to positively impact children's learning outcomes and help the family build a strong foundation for future success right from the start.

The Nurturing Families Network is a federally approved, evidence-based Parents As Teachers Program and has demonstrated results through results-based accountability for all seven of the federal Performance Measures, including improvement in child development and school readiness, improvement in child and maternal health and improvement in parenting skills and behaviors, to name a few. We are dedicated to the development of a coordinated statewide system of early home visitation and look forward to continued efforts to improve and promote positive health, cognitive, social and emotional developmental outcomes for children.

Thank you.

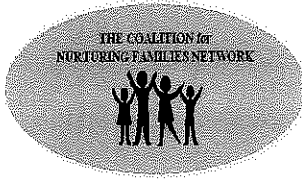
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## The Case for NURTURING FAMILIES NETWORK

Intensive Home Visiting program that meets all Federal Performance Measures

*"Quality home visiting programs lay the foundation for children's healthy development and tax payers reap the benefit when many of our nation's costliest social problems—school failure, child abuse and the use of welfare—are prevented."*  
- PEW Center website

This is how Nurturing Families Network meets Federal Performance Measures for Home Visiting programs\*:

### **Federal performance measure #1: Improvement in Maternal Health**

- A comparison study found that high-risk mothers who came into the Nurturing Families program two months or more before their babies were born resulted in fewer preterm births and fewer low birth weight babies.
- The birth outcomes for these high-risk mothers also compared favorably to those of the general population.

### **Federal performance measure #2: Improvement in Child Health**

- 98% of children in NFN had a pediatric care physician for ongoing care.
- The immunization rates for two year olds in NFN are 96% compared to 66% for two year olds with a similar demographic background on Medicaid.

### **Federal performance measure #3: Improvement in Child Development and School Readiness**

- Children enrolled in Nurturing Families are screened regularly on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), a tool that tracks child development and identifies possible physical and social-emotional delays. 95% of children enrolled in the Nurturing Families Network home visiting program demonstrate normal development. The remaining 5% are referred for further evaluation and/or early intervention services as needed.

This rate of 5% of possible developmental delays of Nurturing Families children is much lower than the 9.5% - 14.2% of demonstrated developmental delays or social and emotional problems in a similar population reported by The National Center for Children in Poverty.

### **Federal performance measure #4: Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect**

- The rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect in the high-risk families participating in Nurturing Families is ONLY 2%, compared to 20%-25% for similar high-risk families not participating in this type of program.
- The low 2% is also lower than the rates of abuse and neglect in other evidence based home visiting programs across the country. Several studies show rates of 5% to 8% of child abuse and neglect for some programs including the Nurse Family Partnership.

**Federal performance measure #5: Improvement of Parenting Skills and Behaviors**

- Mothers participating in the Nurturing Families Home Visiting program show statistically significant positive change in parental behaviors and attitudes.
- Nurturing Families Network is an evidence-based, federally approved Parent as Teachers (PAT) program. PAT curriculum is used to support and facilitate increase of family strengths and protective factors in the areas of attachment, discipline, health, nutrition, safety, sleep and transitions/routines.

**Federal performance measure #6: Reduction in Crime or Domestic Violence**

- The rate of domestic violence among mothers participating in Nurturing Families Network dropped significantly from 2.4% at program entry to 1% after one year. The 1% of participating mothers who reported domestic violence relationship at one-year did not report such relationship at the time of program entry.

**Federal performance measure #7: Improved Coordination of Resources of Community Supports**

- Nurturing Families staff refers participating parents to numerous services in the community to address an array of family needs, ranging from medical and preventive services to family recreation and school enrollment.
- Mothers participating in Nurturing Families made significant improvements on the Community Life Skills Scale (CLS), indicating increased knowledge on how to access community resources and reduction in social isolation.
- NFN mothers made statistically significant gains in life course outcomes during their participation in the program. After one and two years in NFN, participating mothers were more likely to have graduated from high school or obtain a GED, be employed and live independently from other family members. Evaluations also show statistically significant increases in budgeting, having a bank account and increased financial security.

\*Evaluations of the NFN Program are conducted by the University of Hartford Center for Social Research. Full reports are available at [www.ct.gov/ctf](http://www.ct.gov/ctf) click on research.